Roadless Area Characteristics
Evaluating the Effects of Project Activities on Roadless Area Characteristics

Date:	December 2, 2020
Forest/District:	Nez Perce-Clearwater/Moose Creek Ranger District
Roadless Areas:	O'Hara-Falls Creek and West Meadow Creek

Description of Project Activity or Impact to Roadless Area:
Roadside hazard tree removal (intermediate harvest) of approximately 180 acres (along about 9.4 miles of system roads) within Idaho Roadless areas (70 acres in West Meadow Creek IRA along the 2116; 108 acres in O'Hara-Falls Creek IRA along the 464, 464-A, 356, 2103). Most of the road segments are located outside of the roadless areas; small portions of the 2116, 464-A, and 2103 roads are within the IRAs. Roadside units would treat trees that are dead/dying and pose a hazard to the road by an intermediate harvest treatment; up to 150 feet off the road (approximately one tree length) to provide for public and firefighter safety along system roads. Prescribed burning of 268 acres is proposed within the O'Hara-Falls Creek IRA to maintain natural openings, reduce surface fuels, litter depth, and ladder fuels; increase canopy base height (the distance from the ground to the bottom of the tree canopy), and provide a fuel break in strategic locations along Forest Roads 356 and 9716 for wildfire management in the future and public and firefighter safety.

Table 2. Effects to Roadless Characteristics

Roadless Characteristics **From either the 2001 Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B) or Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart C)**	**Is there an effect?** **Yes or No**	**Which direction is the effect?** **Improving, Stable or Downward Trend?**	**Describe the actual effect.** Discuss the effect of the activity on the specific Roadless Characteristics of the IRA you are analyzing. The first step is to identify whether the characteristics are critical or unique to the IRA or the IRA provides a disproportionate amount or quality of this characteristic than the surrounding landscape or project area. If so, the effects should be analyzed specific to the IRA. If not, reference to general project effects from specialist reports may suffice.
Soil, water and Air resources	Yes	Stable	See the Watershed, Aquatics, Fire/Fuels, and Soils sections under Environmental Impacts in the EA and the project record for the impacts to soil, water, and air resources. Removal of dead and dying trees that pose a hazard to roads using skidders or skylines would generally have the greatest impact to soil or water resources, however, design and mitigation measures would protect these values both in and out of the roadless areas, and there were no effects unique or cumulatively significant as a result of this activity within the roadless areas. Soil disturbance is expected to range from 4 to 11% DSD within roadside hazard tree removal units. This is within the limits to maintain soil productivity and this is expected to last 40 years and would occur within 150 feet of roads only where hazard trees are removed (see soils effects in the EA and supplemental soils info and DSD calculations in

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			the project record). Major haul routes that include Forest Roads 356, 464 are high standard roads with effective drainage. All other roads that border the roadless areas are interior haul routes that connect units and landings with the major haul routes. These interior roads (2116, 2103, 464-A) will require maintenance or reconstruction to bring the roads to haul standards and the highest risk for direct sedimentation would be during road maintenance/reconstruction work period. Sediment is delivery likely during these work periods; however, the efficacy of BMPs and Design Criteria after roads are brought to standard should prevent chronic sedimentation. The proposed road work where delivery is anticipated will not result in sedimentation to levels that exceed Forest Plan thresholds and road-related sediment would be negligible. No direct or indirect impacts to water quality are expected. See the Hydrology and Aquatics sections under the Environmental Impacts in the EA. No effect is expected from landscape burning to streams; and no measurable effect to water yield and water yield is expected (EA pp. 51, 40, 52, 54, 63). Effects to soil stability from landscape burning can result from the increased risk of mass movement and erosion following removal of topsoil and stabilizing vegetation on high-risk landtypes. Increases in the extent of ground-disturbing activities (prescribed burning) on high-risk landtypes correlate with increased erosion and mass movement risk. Expected detrimental soil disturbance from landscape burning is 2%. Air quality would adhere to the Clean Air Act that protects air quality and coordination the Idaho/Montana Airshed group would occur to regulate air quality during prescribed burning to minimize impacts to air quality.
Sources of public drinking water	No	N/A	There are no sources of public drinking water present in either the O'Hara-Falls Creek or West Meadow Creek roadless areas.

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Diversity of plant and animal communities.	Yes	Stable/Improving	See the Aquatics, Wildlife, and Botany sections under Environmental Impacts in the EA for the impacts to aquatic, wildlife, and plant habitat. There would not be any significant effects to the diversity of plant and animal communities of the roadless areas. Further, the effects conclusions would not change as a result of the proposed action within the roadless areas, specifically or cumulatively. The roadless areas would continue to provide habitat for sensitive and Forest Plan management indicator species wildlife and plant species. Species habitat was only analysis were the Green Horse project area intersected the roadless areas because of the limited scope and small scale of hazard tree removal and land scape burning within the roadless areas. The remaining portions of the roadless areas would not be affected. Meadow Creek is valued for its water quality and fish habitat. Meadow Creek is far enough removed from project activities and will not be affected (See Aquatics analysis in the EA). While direct effects to plants on the ground can occur at implementation, the overall habitat through time is not substantially changed. However, some localized areas may burn severely and result in ecological changes. Species requiring more open habitats could benefit from fire that reduces conifer or brush encroachment; however, invasive weeds could increase in such areas as a response to the disturbance. Habitats for sensitive plant species will undergo a mix of beneficial to detrimental effects depending upon the severity and placement of fire and the individual species ecology. With these treatments, plants may be harmed upon implementation but the stand ecology determining plant distribution would not change appreciably overall (see botany analysis under the Environmental Impacts of the EA or the botany effects documentation located in the project record). Along roads where treatment occurs in roadless areas contract provisions require equipment to remove all mud, soil, and plant parts before moving into project areas. If necessary,

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			effective weed management within treatment areas would decrease expansion and taper off over time.
Habitat for TES and species dependent on large undisturbed areas of land	Yes	Stable/Improving depends on species	There are no TES wildlife and plant species present. As stated above Meadow Creek is not affected; tributaries to Meadow Creek and other roadless area streams are also not affected by roadless activities (See Aquatics analysis in the EA). Further, the proposal to include hazard tree falling and removal from 150 feet or less from existing forest roads within roadless areas would not change the direct, indirect or cumulative effects determinations on TES resources. The wildlife and botany analysis for the Green Horse project did not identify any specific or unique resources in the O'Hara-Falls Creek and West Meadow Creek roadless areas that are part of the project; therefore the project would not have any significant effects to the diversity of plant and animal communities of the roadless areas. Security for wildlife species would be affected in the short term, during project activities. The proposed landscape burning would largely reduce the understory (to reduce surface fuels), create some snags, and potentially provide habitat/for some species or not affect habitat for some species. Wildlife species that depend on large undisturbed areas of land are not expected to be affected (see wildlife analysis under the Environmental Impacts of the EA). Prescribed fire and fire associated with site preparation post-harvest is generally implemented under moderated conditions that allow fuels to be treated without displacing large areas of forests. While direct effects to plants on the ground can occur at implementation, the overall habitat through time is not substantially changed. However, some localized areas may burn severely and result in ecological changes. In the riparian areas of the moister forest types it is less likely that fire would carry with enough severity to appreciably alter habitat; however, there is some potential for this. Species requiring more open habitats could benefit from

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			fire that reduces conifer or brush encroachment; however, invasive weeds could increase in such areas as a response to the disturbance. Habitats for sensitive plant species will undergo a mix of beneficial to detrimental effects depending upon the severity and placement of fire and the individual species ecology. With these treatments, plants may be harmed upon implementation but the stand ecology determining plant distribution would not change appreciably overall (see botany analysis under the Environmental Impacts of the EA or the botany effects documentation located in the project record).
Primitive, semi-primitive nonmotorized, and semi-primitive motorized classes of dispersed recreation	No	Stable	The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is not changed as the result of the proposed activities as the activities are within "sight and sound" of road corridors. While the roadless areas are described as Semi-Primitive nonmotorized or Semi Primitive motorized; the ROS for the road corridor will always be a motorized ROS regardless of tree falling or removal activities. There may be a short-term effect to solitude from the increased traffic, prescribed burning, and/or sawing activities but that does not change the ROS designation. No changes to the recreational use of the roadless areas area expected and opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive recreation are enhanced with the hazard tree removal treatment (see EA p. 66).
Reference landscapes (for research study or interpretation)	No	Stable	The former Horse Creek Administrative Research Area is no longer in use; project activities would not affect the East Fork Horse Creek drainage within the West Meadow Creek roadless area. The O'Hara Research Natural Area within the O'Hara-Falls Creek roadless area will not be affected.
Natural appearing landscapes with high scenic quality	No	Stable	Changes to the naturally appearing landscape are largely the result of the fires, which were natural events and landscape burning. The proposed action to cut hazard trees from 150 feet or less from existing roads and conduct landscape burning would not contribute significant additional visual impacts to the

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			natural appearing landscapes within the O'Hara-Falls Creek and West Meadow Creek roadless areas. Additionally, as described under the Undeveloped wilderness attribute (EA p. 66-67), the clumpy nature of the tree removal and likelihood for vegetation regrowth screen the cut areas will further reduce any visual impacts to naturally appearing landscapes (see scenic quality analysis). The size of opening next to the road depends on the amount of hazard trees; the intent of the action is not to create large openings but to remove hazard trees. Hazard tree removal would not be substantially noticeable once brush and trees regrow in cut areas within one to two years for the shrub understory and 10 to 15 years for trees to get established and above the brush.
Traditional cultural properties and sacred sites	No	Stable	There are no traditional cultural properties or sacred sites located within the Green Horse project area, this includes where the O'Hara-Falls Creek and West Meadow Creek roadless areas fall within the project area.
Other locally identified unique characteristics	N/A	N/A	No known locally unique characteristics.

Summary

While there may be some short duration effects, they are generally limited to the actual time frame that the implementation activities are occurring rather than the results of the activity. The hazard tree removal treatment areas are small in size and in scope as only dead and dying trees within 150 feet of existing roads would be removed. Opportunities for semi-primitive recreation opportunities would be improved long term as a result of road improvement and hazard tree removal. Landscape burning would maintain most roadless characteristics; habitat for some species requiring large landscapes would be improved for the long term.